

MEMORANDUM

May 26, 1961

TO : The Honorable
John F. Kennedy
President of the United States of America

FROM : Senator Mike Mansfield

SUBJECT: Observations on the forthcoming talks in Vienna.

From our point of view the essential element in the success or failure of these talks will lie in the clarity of purpose with which you enter them. The following would seem to me to be reasonable purposes in a meeting of this kind:

A. To take the measure of Khrushchev, to probe his strengths and weaknesses as a whole person, not merely as the personification of an ideology;

B. To gain a better understanding of how far his own decisions are translatable into prompt action within the Soviet bureaucracy and within the Communist bloc;

C. To seek to determine whether he is prepared to answer "yes" to any of the following questions which are fundamental to a solution by negotiation of the most immediate and critical issues of peace. And, if he is not so prepared, to find out how absolute is his "no" or whether he has proposals additional to what the Russians have already made:

(1) Berlin: Is he prepared to move from his position of internationalization of West Berlin alone to that of internationalization of all Berlin, as he once indicated he was in public comment on a speech of mine?

(2) Laos: Is he prepared to encourage political solution internally on the basis of no further use of force in any circumstances by any Laotian faction and by negotiation among all the factions under the King? Is he prepared to encourage genuine international neutralization of Laos, in effect, on the basis of what is acceptable to Nehru? Will he undertake to join in a general guarantee of a solution along these lines?

(3) Korea and Viet Nam: Will he join in a general reaffirmation of the necessity of maintaining the present truce lines along the 38th and 17th parallels until such time as the Vietnamese and Koreans themselves can reconcile the divided countries?

(4) Formosa and the Pescadores: Will he undertake to join with us in calling on both sides to refrain from the use of armed force in the solution of this problem, without prejudging the eventual solution?

(5) Africa: Will he entertain the idea of funneling all public aid to Africa through a sub-organ of the U.N. or a new international body on a 4/4 contributory basis (1/4 U.S., 1/4 Soviet bloc, 1/4 Western Europe and 1/4 the rest of the world) with controlling powers of the body similarly divided?

(6) Nuclear Testing: Is he prepared to accept our concept of adequate, veto-free inspection in return for the unilateral right of abrogation of the agreement by any party on short notice during the first five years of an agreement? Would this provision not provide, in his judgment, adequate safeguards against alleged fears of espionage masquerading as inspection?

(7) Disarmament: What in specifics is he prepared to offer in the way of disarmament and other guarantees in return for our closing defense bases on the periphery of the Soviet Union?

In attempting to get the best possible answers to these questions from Khrushchev, it would seem to me that these general approaches may prove helpful:

- A. Respect for Russian scientific and artistic achievements.
- B. Encouragement of the Russian desire for international acceptance and international recognition of the progress they have obtained in "modernization" of Russia.
- C. Giving full credit for their great sacrifices and contributions during World War II.
- D. Respect for the Victorian and almost puritanical concepts of morality and virtue which seem to dominate the personal lives of Russians who have arrived.
- E. Reference not to what we ourselves can do in limited conflict situations but what others allied to us might do without our direct entrapment in situations where the Russians might stand outside (i.e. Thais in Laos, West Germans in Berlin, Vietnamese nationalists in Viet Nam, Korean army in Korea). Emphasis on the difficulties in holding the more impetuous of our allies in check.
- F. Reference to the limitations imposed upon us in negotiations by what is acceptable to our own people.
- G. Reference to the larger dreams of humanity (i.e. common efforts in space, common attacks on the physical afflictions of mankind, great expansion in world trade and travel and cultural interchange).
- H. Reference to the historic contributions of Russia to Europe and Western civilization of which Russia is a part and we are a part.
- I. Subtle reminder of the historic difficulties of dealing with the Chinese and the need for better U.S.-Russian communication on this question.

Concluding Observations

I am frank to say, that our record in foreign relations since January, in my opinion, leaves much to be desired. Your statements in this field have been, for the most part, outstanding. The Vice-President's recent trip to Southeast Asia has been helpful.

But the fact remains that, apart from these expressions at the top, the performance of the bureaucracy is still little improved over the Eisenhower days. In some respects it has been worse. The follow-through does not in any fashion suggest that we are more imaginative, more alert or more coordinated. Our remedies have been those of our predecessors, only more of the same. I know that we have not had much time. I know the problems are still very intractable. Nevertheless, I am concerned by the trend and I feel that I owe it to you to express this concern.

It seems to me, therefore, that this meeting you are about to participate in takes on a tremendous significance, not so much by what it may achieve in specifics but by the tone it sets for the basic relations of the Soviet Union and this nation during the months and years ahead. These relations are not only important in themselves but, as you well know, intimately affect all our other relations. The world will be watching these meetings and our own people will be doing the same, I suspect, with some degree of jaded skepticism.

If there emerges from this meeting an impression of an older man and younger man, each with great power and responsibility, ready to explore together soberly and without bombast new ways of achieving a more durable peace, then the meeting will be exceedingly helpful. Those who have a vested interest--emotional or material--in the cold war will be unhappy about it. But the vast majority of the people throughout the world will be immensely gratified. It will add to your stature both at home and abroad, particularly where it counts most (i.e. Britain and India).

But if the meeting degenerates into a slug-fest of words, with each trying to prove he is stronger and more adamant than the other, then it would have been better had the meeting not taken place. The people will not gain by it, and the Democratic party will not gain by it and you will not really gain by it where it counts most, either at home or abroad. That will be the case, in the long run, even if you come out best in the slug-fest.

Therefore, I am disturbed by the reports which have reached me that Thompson says Khrushchev intends to take a very hard and tough line at Vienna. If these reports are reliable, I recommend strongly that you convey to Khrushchev at once, in an appropriate fashion, the idea that you are going to Vienna for serious, sober, frank but quiet preliminary discussions of the problems of peace, without a chip on your shoulder. Further, I would let him know now in polite but unmistakable fashion that unless he is of a similar mind it is not too late to cancel the meeting until a more appropriate time.

Finally, I should think you would want to be prepared to walk out of the meetings at any time, without fanfare, if you are persuaded that they are degenerating into mere propaganda-exchanges. I would hope this would not happen. I should think you would want to take extraordinary 11th hour precautionary steps, within our own bureaucracy to see that our own people in State, C.I.A. or Defense or wherever do not open the door to its happening by bumbling words or actions. But, in the end, it seems to me you should be prepared for its happening.